

OP MEMORANDUM NO. 20-31-57

11 July 1983

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Quality Step Increase

1. The Quality Step Increase (QSI) program, which was enacted by Congress in October 1962 (Public Law 87-793), provides for the granting of additional pay step increases in recognition of exceptionally high quality performance. Over the years the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), serving as the agent, has provided guidance and procedures to the Federal agencies stressing the same basic requirement: performance recognized by the granting of a QSI must be of "sustained high quality . . . at a level that substantially exceeds an acceptable level of competence." The QSI program in CIA has been reviewed several times. Each time, senior Agency management has endorsed maintaining the requirement for high quality performance.

2. The administration of this program in the Agency has been controversial as we have had to implement the guidance and basic intent of Congress within CIA's unique personnel management and performance appraisal systems. Therefore, the Agency has related the performance required for a QSI to whatever performance appraisal definitions exist at a particular time. [] [] has apparently added to this controversy and clarification of Agency policy on this issue is now necessary.

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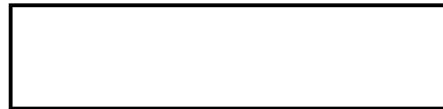
3. In relating "substantially exceeding . . . high level of quality" and such descriptions to the present Agency system, it is extremely difficult to equate a performance rated as meeting all standards or occasionally exceeding standards to a performance that "substantially exceeds standards" and thus is deserving of faster-than-normal advancement in basic pay. At the same time, the policy has not been to arbitrarily rule out a QSI award simply because the performance rating does not equate to "substantially" exceeding standards. The policy in those cases that do not clearly meet the basic requirement has been and will continue to be to make a determination based upon individual merit. Components should provide the Office of Personnel additional information when the officially documented performance rating is lower than that required; and, when there is sufficient supporting evidence to satisfy the intent of the award, a QSI will be considered.

5. There is a wide array of awards available, both monetary and non-monetary, to recognize individual sustained performance, one-time accomplishments, group achievements, etc. To focus solely on the QSI to

recognize an employee's individual performance or accomplishment when another award may be more appropriate tends to create annoyances for both managers and employees if the QSI is not approved. In such cases, the granting of another kind of award for that performance or accomplishment may make that award meaningless in the eyes of the employee. Therefore, it is important that Career Services not only encourage supervisors to recognize performance that should be rewarded, but also ensure that the appropriate award is recommended.

6. Component personnel officers are requested to ensure that information concerning all awards is made available and when a QSI has been determined to be the proper reward, that all supporting documentation is provided.

7. In recognition of the importance of a QSI and the type of performance it is meant to reward, we have adopted an employee suggestion and designed a certificate to be given to employees who receive this award. Certificates will be forwarded to components shortly after approval of the QSI along with the Form 560E. We suggest that the certificate be presented to the employee at an appropriate ceremony.



✓ James N. Glerum
Director of Personnel

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